

# VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT

## Wildlife Habitat Management Report

### Wildlife Management Areas



2005 Annual Report

The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department owns 86 Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) totaling over 118,000 acres. WMAs play an important role in meeting the department's mission. Management of these areas emphasizes the conservation of fish and wildlife and their habitats and provides people with an opportunity to enjoy these resources through fish and wildlife-based activities.

WMAs have been purchased over time using several funding sources, including funds from hunting license sales, US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration (Pittman-Robertson) Fund, Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, and the Land

and Water Conservation Fund. Management and administration of all WMAs are primarily paid for through USFWS Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Funds.

As with other Vermont Agency of Natural

Resources lands, the management of WMAs is guided by Long Range Management Plans (LRMP). LRMPs are based on a thorough natural resources inventory and public input gathered through various methods and stages. Management activities primarily focus on providing a diversity of fish and wildlife habitat as well as quality opportunities for fish and wildlife-based outdoor activities, such as hunting, fishing and wildlife viewing.

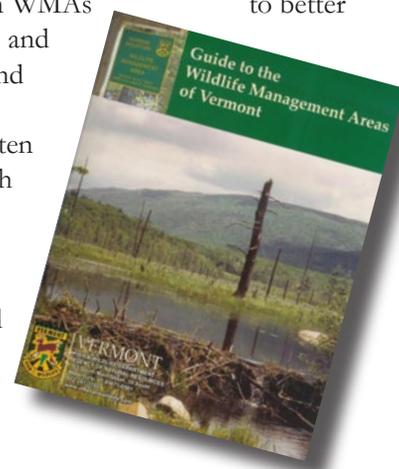
Assistance from the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, & Recreation (FPR) staff is essential for completing WMA long range management planning, property administration and habitat management projects. Wildlife habitat enhancement activities are conducted through commercial and non-commercial means to provide the rich diversity of habitat age groups necessary to meet the needs of many wildlife species.

#### Property Administration

An essential component of any land management program is the maintenance of the property's boundaries and

infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, and signs. Without these efforts, the habitat management and public use goals of each area may not be achievable. The 86 WMAs routinely require boundary line surveying and maintenance, building maintenance, signage, trash removal, and responses to encroachments and other trespasses. Recently, great strides have been made in erecting signs and informational kiosks on WMAs to better advertise their locations and opportunities for fish and wildlife-based activities.

WMA maps with a written narrative describing each WMA are available on the department website ([www.vtfishandwildlife.com](http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com)) and also compiled in a new statewide atlas, Guide to the Wildlife Management Areas of Vermont.



The following maintenance activities were completed on WMAs during the 2005 calendar year:

- Installed or repaired 3 culverts or bridges
- Maintained 5 buildings
- Mowed/maintained 27 dams, dikes and levees
- Maintained 50 miles of forest roads
- Maintained 2640 feet of fence
- Improved/maintained 33 parking areas
- Maintained 45 WMA signs/kiosks and set 2 new ones
- Maintained 10.3 miles of property boundary lines
- Maintained 17 gates and installed 1 new one

#### Non-commercial Wildlife Habitat Management

Non-commercial fish and wildlife habitat management activities include projects where the habitat is enhanced through methods other than standard timber sale contracts. In most cases, department wildlife biologists, other Agency of Natural Resources staff, volunteers, or private contractors perform these management activities.

The following non-commercial wildlife management activities were conducted during the 2005 calendar year:

- Installed or maintained 6 beaver wetland control devices
- Mowed or maintained 919.5 acres of grassland and cropland
- Released 2.5 acres of wild apple trees
- Burned, brush-hogged or reclaimed 96.5 acres of old field habitat
- Restored 0.3 acres of streambank by planting 75 trees
- Managed wetland levels on 962 acres of waterfowl habitat
- Maintained 681 waterfowl nest structures
- Installed 7 eagle or osprey nest structures
- Treated 1.5 acres to control invasive exotic plants
- Thinned saplings on 29 acres of future deer winter habitat
- Conducted 1 habitat/wildlife inventory



VT FWD photo

“Beaver bafflers” are installed where beaver dams imperil WMA roads. They allow retention of beaver wetlands valuable to many species.

## Commercial Wildlife Habitat Management

Commercial wildlife habitat management activities can enhance forest wildlife habitat by removing merchantable wood products. Commercial logging operations also improve public access for fish and wildlife-based activities by helping the department develop or maintain WMA roads, culverts, bridges, and herbaceous openings. All revenues generated by the commercial sale of timber on WMAs are “program income,” and the money earned is reinvested into the management of these lands. Timber sale receipts from commercial forest management activities on WMAs have increased sharply in recent years. In 2003 the department entered into a partnership with the Ruffed Grouse Society (RGS) to address a backlog of pending timber harvests on



VT ANR photo

Prescribed burning kills invading shrubs, maintains forbs (summer forage plants), and enhances blueberry production in old fields. (Victory Basin WMA)

WMAs and to accelerate the level of non-commercial habitat management activities. The 2004 Legislature appropriated \$40,000 in capital funds to the department to facilitate these activities. An additional \$50,000 was appropriated in 2005. The RGS partnership and the capital appropriations have been productive, resulting in a dramatic increase in WMA timber harvests and noncommercial habitat management activities during FY05, FY06 and pending in FY07.

Table 1 reports the actual commercial wildlife habitat management activities on WMAs in FY05. Variations in harvesting volumes across different regions of the state are a result of disparities in State-owned timber acreage and accessibility on WMAs, staffing levels, stand conditions, and work priorities. Table 2 indicates the acreage and minimum projected income for 17 timber harvests that are active, sold, or are about to be sold on 11 WMAs in FY06.



Paul Hamelin

Osprey nesting platforms were erected on 4 WMAs, including 3 sites courtesy of services donated by Vermont Electric Power Company. (South Bay WMA)

**Table 1. Wildlife Habitat Timber Harvests on Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department WMAs  
FY05**

Management Activity	District I Springfield	District II Pittsford	District III Barre	District IV Essex	District V St Johnsbury	State Totals
<b>Timber Harvest</b>						
Fee Acres Harvested	0	61	10	76.45	298.2	445.65
Board Feet (MBF)	0	213.96	41.54	62.84	358.9	677.24
Cords (#)	0	56	241	1,083	1,457.6	2,837.60
Program Income (\$)	1000 <sup>a</sup>	\$47,787.19	\$13,834.20	\$9,892.00	\$116,092.78	\$188,606.17
Non-fee Acres Harvested <sup>b</sup>	±1,400	0	0	0	0	1,400

a Bid deposits b Timber rights privately owned

**Table 2. Timber Harvests Re-activated, Sold or Ready to Sell on Vermont  
Fish & Wildlife Department WMAs as of January 1, 2006**

District	Number of Sales	Acres Clearcut	Acres Selective Cut	Acres Total	Minimum Sale \$ Value*
1 - Springfield	2	37	69	106	\$11,347.00
2 - Rutland	2	22	81	103	\$26,615.00
3 - Barre	2	23	117	139.5	\$26,514.00
4 - Essex	1	40	107	147	\$75,213.00
5 - St. Johnsbury	10	208	1226	1434	\$539,114.00
<b>Totals</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>1600</b>	<b>1930</b>	<b>\$678,803.00</b>

\*Based on actual price of purchased sales, minimum acceptable bid for sales ready to sell, or minimum sale value estimate based on volume of forest products. Revenues subject to winter operating conditions; total income may not be realized until June 30, 2008. Includes 5 sales (979 acres) valued at \$285,740.00 that were prepared by private forestry consultants hired with capital appropriations to The Ruffed Grouse Society and VT Fish & Wildlife Department. NOTE: FY07 annual work plans include preparation of 7 additional timber harvests (860 acres) on 7 WMAs, of which 1 sale will be prepared by a private forestry consultant.

In collaboration with FPR, a total of 17 timber harvests designed to improve habitat on 11 WMAs are scheduled for 2006-07. Five of these are already in process. Nine others have been sold and will be active soon. Three additional harvests are marked and ready to sell. A total of 330 acres will be clearcut, and 1600 acres will be selectively cut – for an overall total of 1930 acres being treated through timber harvests.



Paul Hamelin

Timber harvesting is used to improve habitat for forest game and non-game wildlife species on WMAs throughout the state. (Steam Mill Brook WMA)

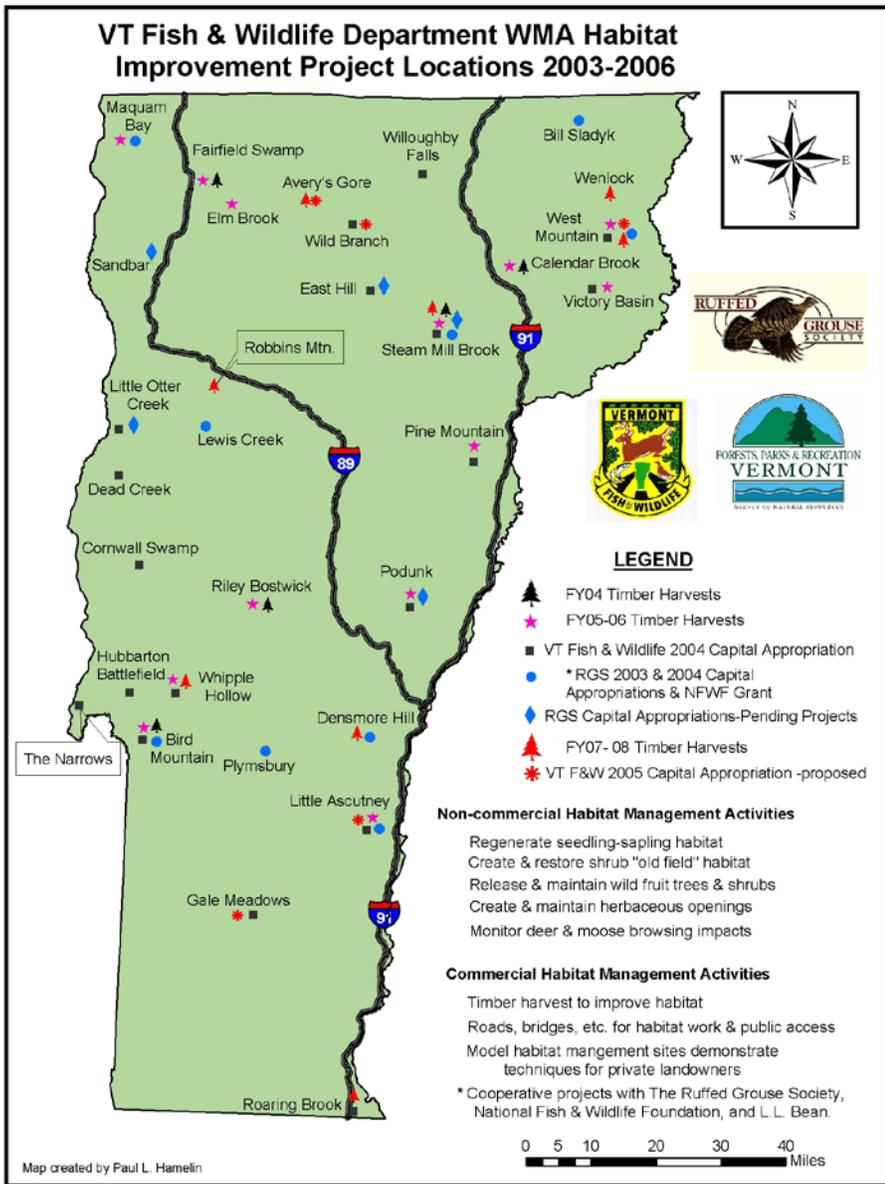


Figure 1. Statewide distribution of WMA timber harvests implemented by ANR since 2003, commercial and non-commercial WMA habitat management activities conducted with these funding sources since 2003, and activities planned for 2006.



Cedric Alexander

Aspen ("popple") provides excellent food and cover for a wide variety of wildlife species. Non-commercial techniques and timber harvesting are being used to retain it in significant quantity. (Steam Mill Brook WMA)



Tony Smith

Pre-commercial thinning is being used to accelerate the growth of young conifer trees into critical winter cover for deer. (West Mountain WMA)